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Ministry of Forests and Range

NAK'AZDLI SECURE $4-MILLION FORESTRY AGREEMENT

VICTORIA – The Province and Nak'azdli First Nation have reached a $4-million forestry agreement that will help support the Nak'azdli's value-added plant near Fort St. James, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today.

"A major goal of these agreements is to create economic development opportunities for First Nations," said Coleman. "In the case of the Nak'azdli, this deal will help an on-reserve mill provide more jobs and revenue for the community."

Under the five-year agreement, the Nak'azdli will have access to 585,000 cubic metres of Crown wood in the Prince George and Mackenzie timber supply areas. The volume will help supply the band's finger-jointed lumber mill, which employs about 60 people.

"Forestry plays a major economic role in our community," said Nak'azdli Chief Leonard Thomas. "This additional timber access gives our mill more operational certainty, and a chance to explore new ventures."

In addition to its value-added plant, the Nak'azdli run an on-reserve gas station and supply harvesting sub-contracts to band members. The Nak'azdli community is largely located on the Nak'azdli Indian Reserve, south of Fort St. James.

"The economic benefits flowing from this agreement are excellent examples of what's possible when we work together," said Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Mike de Jong. "Our government is committed to putting the New Relationship into practice, which includes forging a greater role for First Nations in the forest sector and other resource industries."

Since 2002, the Province has reached agreements with 116 First Nations, providing access to 20.8 million cubic metres of Crown timber and $152.2 million in revenue.

"Nak'azdli's Tl'Oh Forest Products operation is important for not just the band, but for Fort St. James and indeed for the Northern Interior's economy," said Prince George-Omineca MLA John Rustad. "I'm pleased we can support its operation, particularly now as we work together to recover as much economic value as possible from mountain pine beetle attacked trees."

For more information on the Province's mountain pine beetle action plan, visit www.gov.bc.ca/pinebeetle online.

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